

Your Name * Keely PJ Tolbert

School or Organization * Wichita State University

Position/Grade Level/Subject Area * Student/Middle Level/English Language Arts & Science

Presentation Title * The ART in English Language Arts: Encouraging Multimodal Responses to Literature that Foster Critical Thinking and Ignite Engagement

Presentation's intended audience * Middle (6-8) & High (9-12)

Please check all that might apply

- Elementary (K-5)
- Middle (6-8)
- High (9-12)
- Post-Secondary
- Administration
- Other:

Presentation's Area of Focus or Specialty *

Please check all that might apply

- Writing skills
- Reading skills
- Literary interpretation/analysis
- Research/Inquiry
- Speaking/Listening
- New teachers
- Multicultural literature/experience
- LGBTQ
- Interdisciplinary
- Technology
- Other:

Full Description/Explanation of Expected Presentation Content *

This is to give conference chairs as complete an idea as possible what your presentation will include

As educators, we strive to provide students with the in-roads to finding relevance in the texts we teach. Naturally in English Language Arts we use reading and writing as the biggest tools in our toolbox to foster student comprehension and retention of material. But how often do we stop to consider how else we might highlight the Arts portion of our English Language Arts curriculum?

Robert Jordan and Michael DiCicco in their article aptly titled "Seeing the Value: Why the Visual Arts Have a Place in the English Language Arts Classroom" point out that "integrating the visual arts into the classroom makes perfect sense as the two are intricately intertwined. The verbal and visual arts enhance and strengthen understanding and themes in each other (Jordan and DiCicco 31)."

References to the arts –painting, drawing, and music composition for example – are found in numerous texts including several to be discussed in this session. When we encounter a text or a character that discusses the arts other than English Language Arts are we as educators seizing that opportunity to use that information to better our students' understanding of the material they are reading and the characters they read about?

This idea of including the arts in our ELA classroom is reiterated and supported by College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard 7 that states that students at all grade levels should be able to “integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.”

There is a tremendous opportunity for us as leaders in the classroom to encourage the exploration of the merger of English Language Arts and the visual arts and even music. We can and should explore with our students why authors give their characters artistic abilities. If the character is drawn to particular type of art or specific painter or musician – this says something profound about that character and it may even say something profound about the author. Even more impactful – it may say and mean something profound to our student readers. When we spend some time honing in on these aspects of the literature we are teaching and encouraging our students to see and think about those author choices we are growing their abilities to critically think about texts in our classroom and beyond.

If we take this inclusion of the arts in the ELA classroom one step further and bring those same arts into the assessments we ask of our students, we are embracing the idea that reading is a multi-sensory process and that through developing the ability to respond critically to a text through artistic expression – be it painting, sculpture, drawing, music or even digital means - the student is not only showing us they are more personally and actively engaged with a text, but that the rich thematic nature of that text or character has been grasped and understood.

Support for the idea that reading is transactional and that when a reader involves all of their senses dates back to Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory of the 1970s, but in our increasing visually oriented world, by embracing this idea of a multi-sensory and artistically rich approach to teaching literature and assessment we can foster multi-modal critical responses to literature that exceed our expectations and ignite a love of reading in our students.

References

- Baer, Allison. "Constructing Meaning through Visual Spatial Activities: An ALAN Grant Research Project." *The ALAN Review* 34.3: 21-29. *Virginia Tech Digital Library and Archives*. Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English. Web. 20 July 2015.
<https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v34n3/baer.pdf>
- Jordan, Robert M. and DiCicco, Michael. 2012. "Seeing the Value: Why the Visual Arts Have a Place in the English Language Arts Classroom," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 28: Iss. 1, Article 7. <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm/vol28/iss1/7/>

Rosenblatt, Louise M. Writing and Reading: The Transactional Theory. Champaign, Ill.: U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1988. Print.

Presentation Description for the Conference Program *

This is the proposal description as you'd like to have it appear in the conference program. PLEASE keep this description under 100 words.

Art + ELA = multi-modal engagement & critical thinking success for students! This session will explore the idea that the arts can help students build stronger relationships with literature as well as fostering and growing critical thinking skills. Using art and references to art found in ELA texts is an innovative way to approach the Common Core ELA curriculum requirement for diverse media and formats that also increases student interest and engagement. Several current award winning young adult texts and related lesson plans will be discussed. Handouts and resources will also be provided.

What day(s) are you available to present? * (Oct. 22 and/or Oct. 23) – either

If you anticipate any technology needs for your presentation, please describe those below.

- Projector
- Screen
- Extension cord